

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

November 18, 2004
For immediate release

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3. **Public comment sought on four Iowa lake water quality plans**
4. **Volunteers earn awards, recycled money for service**

VANDALS KILL THREE TREES IN VENTURA PARK

VENTURA – Three trees near Ventura Heights Park were intentionally killed last summer and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Cerro Gordo County Sheriff's office are asking for help in solving the crime.

The vandalism occurred in mid to late June when an individual or individuals girdled three large trees – two green ash and one bur oak – with an axe, then chemically treated the trees to kill them. The trees were valued at \$38,000.

“The trees were close to Clear Lake and it is highly probable that the chemical used to kill the trees also made it in to the lake,” said Tammy Domonoske, manager of McIntosh Woods State Park.

The DNR has collected soil samples of the affected area and will be removing the soil and dead trees and stumps. The trees and soil will be replaced and the area re-seeded.

The Cerro Gordo County Sheriff's office has issued a \$500 reward for information resulting in an arrest of the person or persons responsible for the vandalism. Anyone with information is urged to the Sheriff's department at 641-421-3000, or 1-877-671-0052.

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ONE FISH KILL IN CARROLL COUNTY LINKED TO OPEN FEEDLOT

LIDDERDALE – The DNR linked one of two recent fish kills in Carroll County to the Knobbe Brothers' 700-head open feedlot located about four miles northwest of Lidderdale.

The DNR staff has been investigating two fish kills on portions of Elk Run Creek, a tributary of the North Raccoon River, for nearly three weeks. The first fish kill was discovered Nov. 1 while the DNR investigated a complaint about a dead cow.

Linking the fish kill to the Knobbe Brothers' lot involved six DNR specialists who traced county tile lines, followed Elk Run Creek upstream to rule out other potential sources, collected water samples and added dye to runoff from the feedlot.

Test results from the water samples eventually linked the Knobbe lot to water quality problems when water tested upstream of the lot had little fecal coliform and water tested downstream of the lot had extremely high counts – up to 14 million parts per 100 milliliters of water sampled.

The DNR has required the Knobbe Brothers to trench along the county tile line to determine if there are any subsurface connections to the county tile line.

An accurate count of the fish killed in this Nov. 1 fish kill was hampered by muddy and turbid water, but more than 1300 minnows, 91 stonerollers and 10 dead suckers were found.

A second fish kill discovered on Nov. 9 killed out about four miles of stream, upstream of the first fish kill, ending about a mile and a half above the confluence with the North Raccoon. This second incident apparently occurred between Nov. 6 and Nov. 8.

The DNR could not determine a definitive cause of the second fish kill, but found potential sources including septic outfalls, another large open feedlot and a hog operation. Stockpiled manure near the creek was ruled out as a source of the pollution. The DNR also made recommendations to the cattle open feedlot to prevent runoff from reaching the creek and to pump up some pooled wastewater.

DNR fisheries biologists were not able to complete a count of fish killed along the four-mile stretch of stream because of poor visibility in the water and the length of time that the fish had been dead. However, the biologists found dead Johnny darters, bullheads, minnows, stonerollers and suckers.

“Overall, I feel we will be able to greatly improve the quality of Elk Run Creek as a result of our efforts,” said Dan Stipe, supervisor of the Atlantic DNR field office. “In addition to identifying potential sources, better water quality will result.”

The DNR found other violations as the staff investigated the fish kill. The DNR will be working with producers and landowners on proper disposal of dead animals, solid waste and tires.

The DNR will continue to monitor the situation and take legal action if appropriate.

For more information, contact Alison Manz, DNR environmental specialist, at 712-243-1934.

PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON FOUR IOWA LAKE WATER QUALITY PLANS

DES MOINES — Plans for improving water quality at Ingham and Tuttle Lakes in Emmet County and Little Spirit and Upper Gar Lakes in Dickinson County will be discussed at meetings on Nov. 22. Comments on the draft plans will be accepted until Dec. 3.

A draft TMDL — or Total Maximum Daily Load — has been developed for each of these lakes. TMDLs are calculations used to determine how much of a pollutant a water body can receive and still maintain its designated use, such as maintaining aquatic life, allowing body contact such as swimming or being used as a drinking water supply.

TMDLs also include plans on how water quality can be improved through conservation efforts in the respective watersheds. After receiving public comments, the TMDL will be forwarded to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for final approval.

The meeting schedule is as follows:

Ingham and Tuttle Lakes

Nov. 22

1:30 p.m.

USDA Service Center

2109 Murray Road

Estherville

Little Spirit and Upper Gar Lakes

Nov. 22

6:30 p.m.

Iowa Great Lakes Maritime Museum

243 West Broadway

Arnolds Park

A copy of the Draft TMDLs can be obtained and comments made using the following resources:

- Internet: www.iowadnr.com/water/tmdlwqa/tmdl/publicnotice.html
- E-mail: danelle.haake@dnr.state.ia.us
- Telephone: Danelle Haake at (515) 281-6064
- Mail: Danelle Haake, Iowa DNR, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319

For more information, contact Danelle Haake at (515) 281-6064 or Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395.

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VOLUNTEERS EARN AWARDS, RECYCLED MONEY FOR SERVICE

DES MOINES — Honored for protecting the environment they love, natural resources volunteers from across Iowa received awards Saturday for outstanding service.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources recognized both nominees and winners at the Fourth Annual DNR Volunteer Awards Banquet. Handing out plaques, certificates, and pencils made from reclaimed money, the DNR thanked volunteers for their unpaid, but highly valuable work.

Limited budgets and staff make volunteers a vital part of the DNR, officials said.

“We can’t pay you monetarily, but hopefully you realize the difference that you’re making,” said Merry Rankin, director of the DNR’s Keepers of the Land volunteer program. “There are streams all over the state that are cleaner, there are all sorts of wildlife being reintroduced. There’s no way we could do on a daily or yearly basis the things we do without you.”

Ranging from couples who test water quality to families who care for wildlife, roughly 112 volunteers and guests attended the event.

“We both care a lot about the environment,” said Irlanda Helgen of Marshalltown, who attended the event with husband Bill. Both volunteer as water quality monitors. “We feel we have to contribute to nature as well as appreciate it.”

The Keepers of the Land program handed out awards in six categories. IOWATER, a volunteer water quality testing program, honored five winners. Ogden artist and creative consultant David Williamson addressed the group on volunteerism and the creative economy. Williamson, who incorporates recycling into his art, also presented a sculpture made from volunteer-collected trash.

“We’re working one month a year longer now than we did in 1970,” Williamson said in an address about creative thinking. “So much of that new work is creativity. If you get the creativity that you need for work replenished when you volunteer, then you will volunteer.”

Williamson’s 12-foot tall metal canoe paddle served as a backdrop for award winners. He forged the sculpture with metal dredged from Iowa waterways during this summer’s Project A.W.A.R.E. (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition)—a DNR-organized river cleanup.

Award Winners

- The DNR director’s award distinction went to the Iowa Frog and Toad Call Survey—also selected as the group award winner. This 10-year-old project has called on over 100 volunteers to help monitor frog and toad populations by listening for different species’ calls.

“It’s a skeleton crew and a skeleton budget,” nominator Mark McInroy said of the DNR’s Wildlife Diversity program, which oversees the survey. “We require volunteer help. We’re really grateful for their diligent work.”

- Other award winners included Tom and Marvel Griffey and Warren Trotter in the individual category. The Griffey family have volunteered as campground hosts at Walnut Woods State Park for 17 years, cleaning bathrooms, helping park patrons, and going “well beyond the expectations of a campground host,” said Park Manager Tim Gedler.

Trotter has helped maintain the Volga River State Park for the past three years as a volunteer. Formerly a park employee, the retired electrical engineer elected to go off the payroll when he heard the park had to cut positions because of budget shortfalls.

- The youth award went to the Red Oak Middle School Seventh Grade Life Sciences class and its “integrative learning program.” Students use math, science, history, writing, art, geography and other disciplines to monitor and advocate water quality.

Penny Close, Susan Barts, and the Friends of Guttenberg won the large project award for their efforts to save the Guttenberg aquarium. Volunteers raised money in part through an “adopt a critter” program to fund the beloved aquarium, which was in danger of closing.

- Craig Rubenking and Boy Scout Troop 30 earned first place in the small project category for creating three recycling centers at Walnut Woods State Park using old fence posts.
- DNR staff awards went to Big Creek State Park Manager Kim Olofson for his work overseeing volunteer prairie restorations and to geologist Lynette Seigly for her work with IOWATER.

“[Lynette] is one of the IOWATER do-everything people,” said nominator Dave Ratliff. “I think it’s about time Lynette gets recognized for who she is and what she does.”

- IOWATER honored ISU professor Jim Colbert for involving students in natural resources volunteerism. The Arbor Lake water quality monitoring team won the watershed group of the year award, while the Winterset High School Science class won classroom of the year. The “Xstream Cleanup” effort, in which over 1500 volunteers removed 40 tons of garbage from Quad City waterways, won event of the year. IOWATER named Dave Ratliff of the Johnson and Iowa County Watershed Coalition volunteer of the year for his water quality testing work.

For more information, contact Tom O’Neill at (515) 281-4539 or at tom.oneill@dnr.state.ia.us.